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## Module 16: Rising Youth Activism (2016)

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## Module 16: Rising Youth Activism (2016)

### Publisher

University of Pennsylvania

# Module 16: Rising Youth Activism (2016)

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## *Note to Educators*

The Teaching Beyond September 11th curriculum project seeks to capture the events of the two decades (2001-2021) following 9/11 as a means for youth to understand the post-9/11 global order. Developed by a team of educators from the University of Pennsylvania in collaboration with inter-/national scholars, practitioners, and community activist leaders, each stand-alone module is grounded in at least one of six identified themes and is anchored in an event in a particular year following 9/11. The curriculum does not need to be taught sequentially. Lessons within a module may be taught sequentially or individually unless specified.

The curriculum is ideal for advanced high school and early college students. Educators are encouraged to adapt lessons to meet the needs of their classroom and student academic level. The curriculum framework at the end of this document highlights guiding questions for students to grapple with and enduring understandings that we wish for students to glean from these lessons.

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# Module 16: Rising Youth Activism

Primary Theme: **Solidarity and Social Justice**

Secondary Theme: **Democracy and Rights**

Year in focus: **2001, 2016**

Grades: **11 and 12 and freshman college**

Entry points (subject area): **Social Studies, Asian American Studies, Ethnic Studies, Civics, Current Events, Political Science, US Government**

## **Module Context**

2016 marked the 15th year since the US began the War on Terror. It was also the year that Donald Trump became the 45th president of the United States. When he announced his bid for the presidency the year before (June 2015), he promised to push for a “total and complete shutdown of Muslims Entering the United States” if he became president. He made good on that promise by passing Executive Order 13769, popularly known as the Muslim and African Ban, within his first week of office. The ban went through several iterations and though it was challenged in the lower courts, it eventually was upheld by the Supreme Court. Trump was a one-term president. The Muslim and African Ban was overturned by his successor, Joseph Biden.

During the Trump presidency, harassment and hate violence against both Muslims and those presumed to be Muslim as well as Jewish people and immigrant communities more generally went up significantly, impacting many communities across the country.

## **Module Goal**

Students will use their independent learning to define and recognize examples of solidarity and justice and to reflect on how to include activism within their own lives.

## **Module Overview**

This module provides students with an understanding of how young people can engage in activism and work for solidarity and justice for people marginalized by Islamophobia, racism, and white supremacy. In the first lesson, students will view three original videos that highlight the work of four young activists from AMEMSA (Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian) communities. Over the course of two 50-minute periods, students will use videos, texts, and images to engage in discussion to understand how growing up in the aftermath of 9/11 shaped the lives and perspectives of these four activists and motivated them to organize and resist injustice. Students will learn about how AMEMSA communities were targeted after 9/11, especially through the Muslim and African Ban. Finally, students will learn how they can practice solidarity and pursue justice in their own schools and communities.

### **Lesson 1 – Growing up in the Shadow of 9/11**

This two-part lesson focuses on young people who have grown up in the shadow of 9/11 and who have been drawn to activism because of these experiences. Day 1 introduces students to four young activists: Maryam Abdul-Kareem, a Black Muslim woman who grew up in Virginia; Ameer Abdul Rahman, a Palestinian American Muslim man who grew up in Colorado; Harleen Kaur, a Sikh American woman who grew up in the Midwest; and Nour Vakhshoury, an Iranian American woman who grew up in Southern California. They share their personal experiences as children in the immediate weeks and months after 9/11/2001. After learning about these young activists' background and the ways in which 9/11 shaped their lives, students will hear more about the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election and the implementation of the Muslim and African Ban, and how the four activists responded through a range of efforts. Students will be able to understand not only the far reaching impact of the Muslim and African Ban but also the ways in which young people organized resistance to this ban.

Day 2 delves into the four activists' perspectives and work on solidarity and justice for those most marginalized by Islamophobia, racism, and white supremacy, and how high school-aged youth can get involved or further their involvement in activism.

While Day 2 is optional, it is strongly recommended as it brings the activists' stories full circle.

### **Curriculum Connections**

Module 7: Understanding Islamophobia  
Module 10: Youth Activism in Global Perspective  
Module 12: (Responding to) Hate Violence  
Module 15: Muslim Youth and Resistance  
Module 17: The Muslim and African Ban

# Lesson 1. Growing up in the Shadow of 9/11

## *Overview, Background Resources and Materials Needed*

This two-part lesson focuses on young people who have grown up in the shadow of 9/11 and who have been drawn to activism because of these experiences. Day 1 introduces students to four young activists: Maryam Abdul-Kareem, a Black Muslim woman who grew up in Virginia; Ameer Abdul Rahman, a Palestinian American Muslim man who grew up in Colorado; Harleen Kaur, a Sikh American woman who grew up in the Midwest; and Nour Vakhshoury, an Iranian American woman who grew up in Southern California. They share their personal experiences as children in the immediate weeks and months after 9/11/2001. After learning about these young activists' background and the ways in which 9/11 shaped their lives, students will hear more about the aftermath of the 2016 presidential election and the implementation of the Muslim and African Ban, and how the four activists responded through a range of efforts. Students will be able to understand not only the far reaching impact of the Muslim and African Ban but also the ways in which young people organized resistance to this ban.

Day 2 delves into the four activists' perspectives and work on solidarity and justice for those most marginalized by Islamophobia, racism, and white supremacy, and how high school-aged youth can get involved or further their involvement in activism.

While Day 2 is optional, it is strongly recommended as it brings the activists' stories full circle.

### **Background reading for educators before Lesson 1**

It would be beneficial for educators to review the following resources. These resources may also be used as a supplementary reading list for students as per the educator's discretion:

#### Day 1:

- [Is this a Muslim ban? Trump's executive order explained](https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/28/trump-immigration-ban-syria-muslims-reaction-lawsuits) (The Guardian)  
<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2017/jan/28/trump-immigration-ban-syria-muslims-reaction-lawsuits>
- [The "Muslim And" Campaign Is Countering Trump's Travel Ban With A Message All Americans Need To Hear](https://www.bustle.com/p/muslim-campaign-organizers-are-countering-trumps-travel-ban-with-inspiring-message-about-diversity-2940954) (Bustle.com)  
<https://www.bustle.com/p/muslim-campaign-organizers-are-countering-trumps-travel-ban-with-inspiring-message-about-diversity-2940954>
- See also Resource handouts in this lesson

#### Day 2:

- [Bystander, Upstander Interventions](#) (Solidarity Is)

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[https://dc491f07-4030-4f6f-8ab3-](https://dc491f07-4030-4f6f-8ab3-eec10c1fc234.filesusr.com/ugd/70923b_aa5389ab748a4d989e6bcb652e23522c.pdf)

[eec10c1fc234.filesusr.com/ugd/70923b\\_aa5389ab748a4d989e6bcb652e23522c.pdf](https://dc491f07-4030-4f6f-8ab3-eec10c1fc234.filesusr.com/ugd/70923b_aa5389ab748a4d989e6bcb652e23522c.pdf)

- From Silos to Solidarity: Learning from 2017's Resistance Movements (Deepa Iyer, December 2017)

<https://dviyer.medium.com/from-silos-to-solidarity-learning-from-2017s-resistance-movements-fc35f3f409a0>

### Additional resources:

- Muslim Ban Statistics Show Continued Discriminatory Impact (National Iranian American Coalition)  
<https://www.niacouncil.org/resources/muslim-ban-statistics-show-continued-discriminatory-impact/>
- Understanding the Muslim Bans South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)  
<https://saalt.org/15554-2/>
- Narratives of South Asian New Yorkers Affected by Racial and Religious Profiling (South Asian Americans Leading Together et al, 2012)  
<https://saalt.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/In-Our-Own-Words-Narratives-of-South-Asian-New-Yorkers-Affected-by-Racial-and-Religious-Profiling2.pdf>

### Additional resource:

Educators may wish to have more context for the solidarity example provided in Video 3 by Harleen Kaur (at 1m 38s):

- November-December 2020 Farmers Protests in India (Indian American Muslim Council).  
<https://iamc.com/our-muslim-brothers-are-with-us-sikh-muslim-solidarity-at-farmers-protest/>

## Key Terms in Lesson 1

- **AMEMSA:** An umbrella term to describe Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities. These groups are connected in large part through how they have been treated through laws and policies that were passed following 9/11 and targeted many of these groups for surveillance, interrogation, detention, and deportation.
- **Activism:** Refers to the process of people organizing around particular social and political issues to advance awareness and/or bring about social change.
- **Civil Rights:** Under United States law, the legal protection and equality of all. Civil rights in the US include the right to vote and the right to a fair trial.
- **Executive Order:** A signed directive or document from the President that is treated like a law and can impact key operations of the federal government. An example is Executive Order 9066 signed by President Roosevelt that incarcerated Japanese American citizens during World War II.
- **Hijab:** A cloth head covering worn by some Muslim women as a symbol of their faith and practice.



- **Islamophobia:** A phobia or exaggerated bias, hatred, or fear of Islam as religion and those who practice Islam, Muslims. Islamophobia extends to other communities and individuals who are perceived to be Muslim as well. Also known as anti-Muslim racism.
- **Muslim and African Ban:** Popularly known as the Muslim Ban, this Executive Order 13769 was signed by President Donald Trump in January of 2017. Formally named “Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States,” the law prevented the entry of individuals from seven predominately Muslim countries. Protests and lawsuits condemned the law, but the Supreme Court upheld the Executive Order in June 2018. President Biden ended the Executive Order in January 2021.
- **Mosque/”Masjid”:** House of worship for Muslims. In some contexts, may be referred to by its Arabic name, masjid (literally, “place of prayer”).
- **Refugee:** An individual or a group of people fleeing a home country due to violence, fear, or persecution. Refugees are protected under international law allowing them the same rights as other foreign nationals in the host country.
- **”Sikhi” and Sikhism:** The Sikh tradition, known in the Punjabi language as Sikhi, is a relatively young tradition that was founded over 500 years ago in the Punjab region of South Asia. There are more than 25 million Sikhs around the world, which makes Sikhism the world’s fifth largest religion. Sikhs first came to the United States in the late 1800s and there are an estimated 500,000 Sikhs living in America today. (Source: Sikh Coalition)
- **Solidarity:** The practice of showing unity and empathy for others by finding connections and commonalities and acting in allyship.
- **Surveillance:** The careful monitoring or watching of an individual or group of people suspected of a crime. For governments, to surveil means to collect intelligence, confirm identification, or investigate a crime.

## Materials Needed for Lesson 1

### Day 1

1. Lesson 1 Slide Deck with links to the following videos:
  - VIDEO 1: [Identity and the Spark of Activism](#)
  - VIDEO 2: [The 2016 Election and the Muslim Ban](#)
2. Lesson 1 Resource Sheets for extension activity (to be assigned to student groups):
  - Handout 1: Who are “AMEMSA” Communities?
  - Handout 2: Who are Sikh Americans ?
  - Handout 3: Muslims in the United States?
  - Handout 4: What was the government response to 9/11 within the US and abroad?
  - Handout 5: Hate Violence and State Violence following 9/11
  - Handout 6: Timeline of the 4 versions of the Muslim and African Ban

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### **Day 2**

3. Lesson 1 Slide Deck with a link to the following video:
  - VIDEO 3: Solidarity and Lessons in Activism
4. Lesson 1, Handout 7: What Is Solidarity? + Video Annotation Graphic Organizer

# Lesson 1. Growing up in the Shadow of 9/11

## *Learning Plan*

### **Day 1**

#### **Pre-class Preparation Homework - 10 minutes**

Assign the following article to students to read before class.

- 5 Young Muslim Activists Explain Trump's New Travel Ban Impact (Teen Vogue)  
<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/5-young-muslim-activists-explain-trumps-new-travel-ban-impact>

#### **Opening – 5 minutes**

Open the class by explaining to students that in today's class, they will learn from four young people whose lives were shaped by the aftermath of 9/11, much like the young people they read about for homework.

Explain that before introducing the four young people, you wish for them to reflect on their own understandings or connections to 9/11.

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 2]. Have students turn and talk and discuss any one of the following questions:

- What do you remember learning about 9/11 as a child? What do you wish you had been taught?
- Were there school remembrances on the anniversaries of 9/11?
- Do you know people who entered the US military and were stationed in Afghanistan or Iraq?
- Are you connected to any of the communities that faced backlash after 9/11?

Bring back class after 3 minutes and ask a couple of students to share.

#### **Key Concepts - 5 minutes**

Before watching the videos, it might be helpful to let students know about some of the concepts/themes mentioned in the video. The resource sheets (handouts 1-6) for the extension activity provide more details; a few key points are highlighted below that you may wish to share with students so they have more context for the videos.

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Explain that the four young activists that they will be learning from are from very different backgrounds though they fall under the category of AMEMSA. Ask students if they can guess what this category stands for. After 1-2 students have contributed, show slide with AMEMSA definition.

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 3]. Explain that AMEMSA is an umbrella term to describe Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities. These groups are connected in large part through how they have been treated through laws and policies that were passed following 9/11 and targeted many of these groups for surveillance, interrogation, detention, and deportation.

Important points to highlight:

- **Arab** is a regional identity based on language (often used as an ethnic identity)
- **Middle Eastern** is a regional identity (though it is often associated as an ethnic identity)
- **Muslim** is a religious identity and not necessarily tied to a particular country or region (though there are many countries around the world with large Muslim populations).
- **South Asian** is a regional identity

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 4]. Optionally, share this map that shows Arab, Middle Eastern and South Asian countries. Be sure to explain to students these are the heritage countries of AMEMSA communities. Stress that it does not include any “Muslim countries” as that is a misnomer. While there are many Muslim majority countries in the world, there is no such thing as a “Muslim country”. By way of example, you may want to share with students that Indonesia has the largest population of Muslims living within its borders.

You may wish to add that Muslims have been in the United States, long before the union itself. The first Muslims actually arrived in the Americas in the 1600s as part of the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade (see also resource sheet 3 in this lesson: When did the first Muslims arrive in the Americas?)

### Application – 35 minutes

Note to educator: During this period, you will be showing students two videos interspersed with small group discussion. If you prefer to split students into groups before playing the video, do that now. Ideally, split students into groups of 4.

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 5]. Introduce the four young activists.

- Maryam Abdul-Kareem, a Black Muslim woman who grew up in Virginia
- Ameer Abdul Rahman, a Palestinian American Muslim man who grew up in Colorado
- Harleen Kaur, a Sikh American woman who grew up in the Midwest; and
- Nour Vakhshoury, an Iranian American woman who grew up in Southern California.

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Explain that these four activists were in elementary school when 9/11 took place. In the video, they describe the spark of their activism and how their experiences growing up in the shadow of 9/11 impacted them in lasting ways.

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 6] Play video (6.25 minutes) [Video 1: Identity and the Spark of Activism](#)

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 7] Following the video, invite students to spend 10 minutes discussing the following questions in their small groups (split into groups now if not done already). Additional prompts follow.

- What new information have you learned about 9/11 from this video and the context that your teacher shared?
- What are your reactions to the stories that the young activists shared about their childhood experiences following 9/11?

Additional prompts that students may choose to respond to (or may be assigned to groups - educator choice):

- Maryam uses the term “othered” to describe her experiences at school following 9/11. What does it mean to be “othered”? / What does Maryam mean when she recounts her experiences as a Black Muslim?
- How do you think Ameer’s experiences as a six-year-old listening to death threats and seeing security at his school affected him?
- When Harleen mentions that her family didn't fly as much, she is talking about the "flying while brown" phenomenon. What does that mean? How did 9/11 impact the way that Harleen’s family traveled, and why?

Next, ask students if they have heard of the Muslim and African Ban. If students have engaged with materials from Module 17, this is a good time to go over some of the key learnings; if not, briefly explain the following:

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 8].

In December 2015, then-candidate Donald Trump called for “a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on.” Immediately following his inauguration, he signed into law the first iteration of Executive Order 13769 (known as the Muslim Ban and later as the Muslim and African ban). This was a ban on travelers, refugees, and immigrants from seven Muslim-majority countries: Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Somalia, and Sudan.

Explain to students that the next video discusses the Ban’s passage and impact on the young activists’ work and on their communities.

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[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 9]. Play video (5.5 minutes) Video 2: The 2016 Election and the Muslim and African Ban

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 10]. Following the video, prompt students to discuss the following questions in their small groups (7 minutes):

- If your community was targeted by the Muslim and African Ban, how might you react?
- What do the young activists note in Video 2 about the ways they reacted to the Muslim and African Ban that were different from their reactions and experiences following 9/11 (Video 1)? In what ways were their reactions or experiences the same?

Ask a couple of students to share (3 minutes)

### **Debrief – 5 minutes**

In closing, ask students what were 1-3 takeaways from today's class.

If you're planning on continuing to day 2, allow students to choose one of the following six questions (or randomly assign) and provide students with the resource sheet related to their topic. Instruct students to individually research this topic and list 1-3 things they learned from their research to share in the next class meeting.

- Who are AMEMSA communities?
- Who are Sikh Americans and how has 9/11 impacted them?
- How long have Muslims been in the US? Is Islamophobia a new phenomenon?
- What was the government's response to 9/11 in the US and abroad?
- How did hate violence and state violence play out following 9/11?
- What was the Muslim and African Ban?

Note to educator: The above activity can also be used as an extension activity or homework even if you are not continuing with Day 2. Be sure to have time in a subsequent class for students to report back.

## **Day 2**

### **Opening – 15 minutes**

Open day two by prompting students to reflect on what they learned from the last class (specifically on Video 2), and ask what question/s they might ask these activists about their experiences with activism. Write student responses on the board to review later.

Next, ask students to each share **one thing** they learned from their research on the 6 topics/questions assigned in the previous class. Encourage students not to repeat things that other members with the same topic may have already shared but to add to information students have already shared. Be sure to correct any disinformation that might be shared. Time permitting, have each member of the class contribute one fact they learned.

### Key concepts overview – 10 minutes

Next, introduce students to the third and final video featuring the four activists. Explain that Video 3 delves into the four activists' perspectives and work on solidarity and justice for those most marginalized by Islamophobia, racism, and white supremacy. It also provides ideas of how youth can get involved or further their involvement in activism.

Since a central theme of the video is solidarity, ask students what solidarity means to them.

As students are answering, write their responses on the board to revisit later. Next, pass out Lesson 1, Handout 7: What is Solidarity? Explain that these solidarity principles show up in the video, so they should make note of them on the graphic organizer. Go over the 4 principles and answer any questions before starting the video.

### Application – 20 minutes

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 11] Play video (8.5 minutes). Video 3: Solidarity and Lessons in Activism

[Lesson 1 Slide Deck, Slide 12]

Next, split students into small groups and ask them to hold a discussion on the following:

- Ameer mentions that justice would mean taking a step back; Nour mentions that it means not being burned out; and Maryam mentions joy. What do these descriptions and examples of justice mean to you?
- Review these solidarity principles on the handout. Which of the solidarity principles show up/are mentioned in the videos, and why are they important?

After viewing these videos and completing the graphic organizer, ask students **what does justice for AMEMSA communities look like to you?** (connect student responses to their definitions of solidarity. If time is running out, assign as a short reflection piece for homework).

**Ask students if their questions that they generated at the start of class** (what question/s might they ask these activists about their experiences with activism) **have been answered.** What questions remain?

### Debrief –5 minutes

In closing, have students share ideas of how they can practice solidarity in their school or community. This provides a foundation for Option 1 below, should educators wish to assign it as a follow up.

### Extension Activities or Homework

#### *Option 1:*

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Reflective Essay (250 words): After learning about the experiences of the young activists in all 3 videos, what are you inspired to do differently? Referencing their advice and experiences, how are you motivated to pursue justice in your school and community?

As an additional resource, students may wish to explore this website for some ideas:

- [#NoBanNoWallNoRaids – Support communities of color, immigrants and refugees](https://nobannowallnoraid.wordpress.com/) (website)  
<https://nobannowallnoraid.wordpress.com/>

### *Option 2:*

Find an article from between 9/11/2001-12/31/2001, that mentions young people from AMEMSA communities and the impact of 9/11 on them. Does the title or content of the article reinforce the stereotypes or negativity that the young people in the videos discuss having experienced? How can you tell?



# Lesson 1. Growing up in the Shadow of 9/11

## *Student Handouts and Supplementary Teaching Materials*

Day 1 and 2:

1. Lesson 1 Slide Deck Preview (12 slides) [Please download separate slide deck file]

Day 1:

Resource Sheets for extension activity:

2. Handout 1: Who are “AMEMSA” Communities?
3. Handout 2: Who are Sikh Americans?
4. Handout 3: Muslims in the United States
5. Handout 4: What was the government response to 9/11 within the US and abroad?
6. Handout 5: Hate Violence and State Violence following 9/11
7. Handout 6: Timeline of the 4 versions of the Muslim and African Ban

Day 2:

8. Handout 7: What Is Solidarity? + Video Annotation Graphic Organizer (1 per student)

Additional optional resource: Transcripts of videos

## Lesson 1 Slide Deck Preview (12 slides)

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Module 16, Lesson 1

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## Reflecting on 9/11

**TURN AND TALK:** Respond to any of the following prompts. It's okay if each person responds to a different prompt (3mins)

1. What do you remember learning about 9/11 as a child? What do you wish you had been taught?
2. Were there school remembrances on the anniversaries of 9/11?
3. Do you know people who entered the US military and were stationed in Afghanistan or Iraq?
4. Are you connected to any of the communities that faced backlash after 9/11?

Arab  
Middle  
Eastern  
Muslim  
South  
Asian

AMEMSA is an umbrella term to describe Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities.

These groups are connected in large part through how they have been treated through laws and policies that were passed following 9/11 and targeted many of these groups for surveillance, interrogation, detention and deportation.



## Meet the activists

Maryam Abdul-Kareem	Ameer Abdul Rahman	Harleen Kaur	Nour Vakhshoury
a Black Muslim woman who grew up in Virginia	a Palestinian American Muslim man who grew up in Colorado	a Sikh American woman who grew up in the Midwest	an Iranian American woman who grew up in Southern California

## Identity and the Spark of Activism

In this first of three videos, the young activists describe the spark of their activism and how their experiences growing up in the shadow of 9/11 impacted them in lasting ways.

### Think-Pair-Share

What new information have you learned about 9/11 from the [Identity and Spark of Activism](#) video?

What are your reactions to the stories that the young activists shared about their childhood experiences following 9/11?

#### Additional Prompts:

1. Maryam uses the term "othered" to describe her experiences at school following 9/11. What does it mean to be "othered"? / What does Maryam mean when she recounts her experiences as a Black Muslim?
2. How do you think Ameer's experiences as a six-year-old listening to death threats and seeing security at his school affected him?
3. When Harleen mentions that her family didn't fly as much, she is talking about the "flying while brown" phenomenon. What does that mean? How did 9/11 impact the way that Harleen's family traveled, and why?

### What was the Muslim and African Ban?

In December 2015, then-candidate Donald Trump called for a "total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States until our country's representatives can figure out what is going on."

Immediately following his inauguration in 2016, he signed into law the first version of the Muslim Ban, a ban on travelers, refugees, and immigrants from seven Muslim-majority countries (Iran, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Libya, Somalia, and Sudan)

### [The 2016 Election and the Muslim & African Ban](#)

This second video discusses the Muslim and African Ban's passage in 2017, and the impact that the ban had on the young activists' work and on their communities.

### Discussion Prompts

If your community were targeted by the Muslim & African Ban, how might you react?

What do the young activists note in Video 2 about the ways they reacted to the Muslim & African Ban that were different from their reactions and experiences following 9/11 (Video 1)? In what ways were their reactions or experiences the same?

### [Solidarity and Lessons in Activism](#)

This final video delves into the four activists' perspectives and work on solidarity and justice for those most marginalized by Islamophobia, racism, and white supremacy. It also provides ideas of how youth can get involved in or further their involvement in activism.

### Discussion Questions

Ameer mentions that justice would mean [taking a step back](#); Nour mentions that it means [not being burned out](#); and Maryam mentions [joy](#). What do these descriptions and examples of justice mean to you?

After viewing these videos, what does justice for AMEMSA communities look like to you?

## Resource Sheet 1: Who are “AMEMSA” Communities?

*Directions: Explore the resources listed on this sheet to learn more about AMEMSA communities in the United States. Write down at least three takeaways from your research that you will share with your peers.*

AMEMSA is an umbrella term to describe Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian communities. These groups are connected in large part through how they have been treated through laws and policies that were passed following 9/11 and targeted many of these groups for surveillance, interrogation, detention, and deportation.

### Arab

There are at least 3.5 million Arab Americans in the US. They trace their heritage from countries across North Africa and in Western Asia. Arabs can identify as any (or no) religion. Arab is an ethnic and linguistic identity as most people who are Arab speak Arabic or are from countries where Arabic is the primary language. The same way someone who is Italian might be Roman Catholic, or might be Protestant, or may not identify with any religion, an Arab person might identify as Muslim, Christian, Jewish, atheist, or any other religion.

There are 22 Arab states: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Learn more about Arab-Americans here: [Demographics — Arab American Institute](https://www.aaiusa.org/demographics) <https://www.aaiusa.org/demographics>

### Middle Eastern

This identity is a regional one, not a religious one. It has also come to be seen by some as an ethnic identity. People from the Middle East can identify with any (or no) religion. Middle Eastern people include those from Iran, but Iranians do not identify as Arab; ethnically, they identify as Persian. Similarly, people from Turkey identify as Turkish and speak Turkish. Finally, Israel, which is a Jewish state, is also part of the Middle East.

The following countries typically get included when discussing the Middle East: Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

### Muslim:

Muslim is a religious identifier and is not an ethnic or regional identity. Muslims follow Islam, a monotheistic religion that shares many of the basic tenets of Judaism and Christianity. While there are several Muslim majority countries in the world, a Muslim can have any ethnicity, race, or background.

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For example, the accompanying videos for this module include perspectives from someone who identifies as a Palestinian Muslim, and someone who identifies as a Black Muslim. Both share a religious identifier, but they do not share a race or country heritage. Islam is a monotheistic religion that centers on the basic tenets of Judeo-Christian faiths. Muslims from distinct racial/ethnic groups have unique histories. The country with the most Muslims is Indonesia, followed by Pakistan and India. While both Indonesia and Pakistan are Muslim majority countries, India is a Hindu majority country, though it has the third largest number of Muslims living within its borders.

### **South Asian:**

South Asian describes a regional identity that has come to be known as an ethnic identity. Some people also use the term “desi”. South Asians in the United States include people tracing their origins to Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Afghanistan is often positioned within the South Asian region. This region holds great religious, cultural and linguistic diversity. There are approximately 5.4 million South Asians living in the US, making the community one of the fastest growing ethnic groups. Learn more about South Asians in the US here: [Demographic Information | SAALT](https://saalt.org/south-asians-in-the-us/demographic-information/) <https://saalt.org/south-asians-in-the-us/demographic-information/>

If you have more questions about a specific group described in the AMEMSA acronym, access this resource to learn more: [AMEMSA Fact Sheet](https://aapip.org/) from the Civic Engagement Fund project of [Asian Americans/Pacific Islanders in Philanthropy](https://aapip.org/) <https://aapip.org/>

To learn more about the categories of Arab, Middle East and Muslim, check out this resource: [Teaching Mideast](https://teachmideast.org/articles/arab-middle-eastern-and-muslim-whats-the-difference/). <https://teachmideast.org/articles/arab-middle-eastern-and-muslim-whats-the-difference/>

Test your knowledge about AMEMSA communities by taking this quiz (answers will be revealed on submission). <https://forms.gle/GNr1CA4s7b735JdR6>

The following map shows the heritage countries for the many communities that fall under the AMEMSA term *except* Muslim since that is a religious, not regional identity.



What are 3 things you learned from your research that you can share with your peers?

## Resource Sheet 2: Who are Sikh Americans?

*Directions: Explore the resources listed on this sheet to learn more about the Sikh community in the United States. Write down at least three takeaways from your research that you will share with your peers.*

Watch: CNN "Introduction to Sikhism": <https://vimeo.com/353626143/c26f27df57>

- Sikhism is the 5th largest religion in the world. It was founded in the 15th century in modern-day India.
- Sikhs are defined by their belief in one God, equality, justice, and community. If you visit a gurdwara (Sikh house of worship) you will see the Sikh spirit and values in action. Everyone, regardless of background, is welcome to partake in the worship and langar (free kitchen), where they are served by their fellow worshippers.
- According to the Sikh Coalition, the Sikh tradition is known in the Punjabi language as "Sikhi." (Learn more about Sikhi from the [Sikh Coalition](#)). [note: Harleen uses the word "Sikhi" in Video 1 (5:56)]
- Observant Sikhs (men and women) do not cut their hair, and cover their hair with a turban as an expression of their commitment to equality, service, and justice.
- There are an estimated 700,000 Sikhs in the United States with gurdwaras (Sikh houses of worship) across the country.
- Despite their long history and contributions to the US, Sikh Americans have been the targets of discrimination, particularly following the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Balbir Singh Sodhi was shot and killed outside his gas station in Mesa, Arizona, making him the first victim of a fatal post-9/11 hate crime.
- On August 5, 2012, six worshippers were killed in an attack at the Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin, the deadliest attack on an American house of worship since the 1963 attack on the 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama. (Note: Harleen mentions the Oak Creek massacre during her reflections in video 1)

Source: [SALDEF](#)--Sikh American Legal Defense and Education Fund, "Who are Sikh Americans?"

Learn more at The Sikh Coalition: <https://www.sikhcoalition.org/about-sikhs/>

**What are 3 things you learned that you can share with your peers?**

### Resource Sheet 3: Muslims in the United States

*Directions: To better understand the context of Muslims in the United States, review the following resources. As you will learn, Muslims have been in the Americas long before the US was established as a union and are one of the fastest growing religious groups in the United States though they constitute only 1.1% of the US population. Write down at least three takeaways from your research that you will share with your peers.*

Jennifer Williams (2017) **A brief history of Islam in America**. Vox News.

<https://www.vox.com/2015/12/22/10645956/islam-in-america>

**Sapelo Square:** Website focusing on Islam in Black America and Black Muslim Life.

<https://sapelosquare.com/about-us/>

Sam Haselby (20 May 2019). **Muslims lived in America before Protestantism even existed**. AEON Digital Magazine: <https://aeon.co/essays/muslims-lived-in-america-before-protestantism-even-existed>

**African Muslims in Early America**. Smithsonian National Museum of African American History & Culture

<https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/collection/african-muslims-early-america>

Margarita Rosa (2018). **1503: America's First Muslim Ban**. The Yaqeen Institute

<https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/1503-america-first-muslim-ban>

Tazeena M. Ali (2021, May). **Islamophobia, Anti-Blackness, and the Challenges of Healing Muslim-Christian Relations in the United States**. The Berkley Center at Georgetown University

<https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/responses/islamophobia-anti-blackness-and-the-challenges-of-healing-muslim-christian-relations-in-the-united-states>

**What are 3 things you learned from your research that you can share with your peers?**



## **Resource Sheet 4: What was the government response to 9/11 within the US and abroad?**

*Directions: Explore the resources listed on this sheet to learn more about policies passed in the aftermath of 9/11. Note that these laws are quite complicated and may be challenging to understand. The first two resources below are helpful in providing an overview and more context. The first post summarizes some of the key policies that have emerged after 9/11 that have set up a massive surveillance apparatus in the United States; the second provides a timeline for context. Further down are some of the major laws that have been passed, with links to resources that describe them in more detail. Write down at least three takeaways from your research that you will share with your peers.*

Deepa Iyar (2018): **A Perfect Storm in the Making for 17 Years: A Reflection and Call to Action.**  
Medium. <https://dviyer.medium.com/a-perfect-storm-in-the-making-for-17-years-a-reflection-and-call-to-action-711425228a70>

Council for Foreign Relations (n.d): **How 9/11 Reshaped Foreign Policy** (Timeline 2001-04).  
<https://www.cfr.org/timeline/how-911-reshaped-foreign-policy>

### **2001: The Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act (USA PATRIOT)**

ACLU Informational Flyer

<https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/FilesPDFs/patriot%20act%20flyer.pdf>

### **2002: National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS)**

CNN: The Bush-era Muslim registry failed. Yet the US could be trying it again.

<https://www.cnn.com/2016/11/18/politics/nseers-muslim-database-qa-trnd/index.html>

### **2004: The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA)**

Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University (2009)

Intelligence Reform. <https://www.belfercenter.org/publication/intelligence-reform>

### **2011: Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States (aka Countering Violence Extremism or CVE)**

CVE Programs summary:

Brennan Center for Justice at New York University (2015): Countering Violence

Extremism Programs: Myths and Facts.

<https://www.brennancenter.org/sites/default/files/analysis/102915%20Final%20CVE%20Fact%20Sheet.pdf>

Center for Constitutional Rights (n.d.): Muslim Profiling

<https://ccrjustice.org/home/what-we-do/issues/muslim-profiling>

**2017: The Muslim and African Bans**

The Bridge Initiative. **Infographic on the ban by the numbers:**

<https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/the-muslim-and-african-bans-by-the-numbers/>

**What are 3 things you learned from your research that you can share with your peers?**

## Resource Sheet 5: Hate Violence and State Violence following 9/11

*Directions: Explore the resources listed on this sheet to learn more the spike in hate violence in the United States both in the aftermath of 9/11 until 2015 and then in the period between 2016 to the present. Note that 2015 is the year that Donald Trump announced his bid for the US presidency. During his time as President, hate violence against Muslims and other groups had a significant increase. Write down at least three takeaways from your research that you will share with your peers.*

### Hate Violence:

According to the FBI Hate Crimes Report, 27.2% of hate crimes **reported in 2001 were motivated by religious bias and were classified as “anti-Islamic”**. Further, the FBI also reported a **1,600% increase in anti-Muslim hate crime incidents in the three weeks following 9/11/2001**. This likely included violence against non-Muslims groups such as Sikhs, Hindus, and Arabs as well.

*“Although the violence decreased after the first three weeks, it was soon replaced by other bias-related incidents, including discrimination in education, employment, and religious land use. At the same time, new law enforcement and immigration policies developed in response to the terrorist attacks appeared to target people from Arab and Muslim countries, such as the now-discontinued special registration program for certain immigrants from specified countries. Such policies were perceived by members of those communities as sending a mixed message regarding the government’s commitment to protect them from hate crimes and discrimination.”*  
(p. 4)

Source: Confronting Discrimination in the Post-9/11 Era: Challenges and Opportunities Ten Years Later  
A Report on the Civil Rights Division’s Post-9/11 Civil Rights Summit Hosted by George Washington University Law School October 19, 2011.

[https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/crt/legacy/2012/04/16/post911summit\\_report\\_2012-04.pdf](https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/crt/legacy/2012/04/16/post911summit_report_2012-04.pdf)

New America: Anti-Muslim Activities

<https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/anti-muslim-activity/>

A series of maps and charts that showcase anti-Muslim activities in the United States between 2012-18.

Modi, R. (2018). *Summary of Report: Communities on Fire: Confronting Hate Violence and Xenophobic Political Rhetoric*. SAALT. <https://saalt.org/report-communities-on-fire-confronting-hate-violence-and-xenophobic-political-rhetoric/>.

The Costs of War Project, Brown University. Racial profiling and Islamophobia.

<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/social/rights/profiling>

“Hate crimes against Muslims spiked 500 percent from 2000-2009”

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Kishi, K. (2021, July 22). *Assaults against Muslims in U.S. surpass 2001 level*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/11/15/assaults-against-muslims-in-u-s-surpass-2001-level/>.

“Overall, there were 307 incidents of anti-Muslim hate crimes in 2016, marking a 19% increase from the previous year. This rise in hate crimes builds on an even sharper increase the year before, when the total number of anti-Muslim incidents rose 67%, from 154 in 2014 to 257 in 2015.”

### School Bullying & Discrimination

Ochieng, A. (2017, March 29). *Muslim schoolchildren bullied by fellow students and teachers*. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/03/29/515451746/muslim-schoolchildren-bullied-by-fellow-students-and-teachers>.

“A new survey by the Institute for Social Policy and Understanding (ISPU) reveals that 42 percent of Muslims with children in K–12 schools report bullying of their children because of their faith, compared with 23 percent of Jewish and 20 percent of Protestant parents.”

The Sikh Coalition (2014). “Go home terrorist”. A report on bullying against Sikh American school children”. <https://www.sikhcoalition.org/documents/pdf/go-home-terrorist.pdf>

**What are 3 things you learned from your research that you can share with your peers?**

## Resource Sheet 6: Timeline of the 4 versions of the Muslim and African Ban

*Directions: Explore the resources listed on this sheet to learn more various iterations of the Muslim and African Ban. Write down at least three takeaways from your research that you will share with your peers.*

The Bridge Initiative. **Infographic on the ban by the numbers:**

<https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research/the-muslim-and-african-bans-by-the-numbers/>

The Bridge Initiative. **Background of the ban:** <https://bridge.georgetown.edu/research-publications/reports/the-muslim-and-african-Ban/>

National Immigration Law Center: [One Year After the SCOTUS Ruling: Understanding the Muslim Ban and How We'll Keep Fighting It](#)

Summary of the 4 iterations of the Muslim and African Ban:

- January 27, 2017: Muslim Ban 1.0: 90-day ban for all nationals from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen, and all refugees.
- March 6, 2017: Muslim Ban 2.0: 90-day ban for all refugees and nationals from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, and Yemen
- September 24, 2017: Muslim Ban 3.0: Indefinite ban for most or all nationals from Iran, Libya, North Korea, Somalia, Syria, and Yemen, and government officials from Venezuela and their families.
- October 24, 2017: Muslim Ban 4.0: 90-day ban for all refugees from Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Libya, Mali, North Korea, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, Syria, Yemen, and certain stateless individuals.
- Despite being challenged at the Supreme Court level, it was upheld on June 26, 2018. Learn more here: [Supreme Court upholds President Trump's travel ban against majority-Muslim countries](#) (USA Today) <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/06/26/supreme-court-upholds-president-trump-immigration-travel-ban/701110002/>
- It was ultimately overturned on January 20, 2021 by President Biden, via presidential proclamation. ([Proclamation on Ending Discriminatory Bans on Entry to The United States](#) (White House) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/presidential-actions/2021/01/20/proclamation-ending-discriminatory-bans-on-entry-to-the-united-states/>

Additional resources:

- [Muslim Kids Read Heartbreaking Letters From WWII To Show How History Is Repeating Itself](#) (Huffington Post, May 2016) [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/muslim-kids-japanese-american-kids-internment-camp-letters\\_n\\_573b1071e4b060aa781b3375](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/muslim-kids-japanese-american-kids-internment-camp-letters_n_573b1071e4b060aa781b3375)
- [#NoBanNoWallNoRaids – Support communities of color, immigrants and refugees](#) (website) <https://nobannowallnoraid.wordpress.com/>

**What are 3 things you learned from your research that you can share with your peers?**

## Lesson 1, Handout 7: What Is Solidarity? + Video Annotation Graphic Organizer

**Directions:** Review the solidarity values and practices from the *Solidarity Is* project, and then fill out the graphic organizer below.

### Solidarity values

Solidarity is a strategy and value. It means that we focus on how we are connected with people rather than our differences. Through solidarity, we find empathy and care for others, and can bring about justice for all.

Our work on solidarity is rooted in understanding and acknowledging that the laws, practices, systems, and institutions in the United States are rooted in white supremacy, patriarchy, capitalism, colonialism and xenophobia. We recognize how all communities have been affected by these.

We practice solidarity not only externally but internally within our communities. Addressing anti-Black racism within our communities is a cornerstone of our solidarity practice and our resistance to "wedge politics" that pit communities of color against one another.

Our work on solidarity seeks to understand and integrate ideas from other movements for change, both in the United States and around the world, as well as from ancestral wisdom and re-imagined futures.

*Adapted from: Solidarity Is, <https://www.solidarityis.org/principles>*

How does solidarity show up in the videos? Why is it important for us to practice solidarity?	
Video 1	
Video 2	
Video 3	





## **Video 1: Identity and the Spark of Activism**

### **What do you remember about 9/11?**

### **How did 9/11 affect your family, community, and identity?**

**Ameer Abdul:** In 2001, I was turning six years old.

**Harleen Kaur:** When 9/11 happened, I will say I was in third grade. I think I was maybe around 7.

**Maryam Abdul-Kareem:** So I was like in fourth grade when 9/11 happened.

**Nour Vakhshoury:** 9/11 occurred when I was seven years old at the time. And it definitely did have a very lasting impact on me, and it shaped the way I move through the world after that event. My mom explained this had happened, some bad people got into a plane and crash it, in a way that I guess a seven-year-old could understand what was going on, tried her best to explain that to us, and then she also mentioned, you guys should be a little bit careful at school, like look out for each other. I just want to make sure that these kids are still nice to you. And at that point, I had no idea like what was the correlation.

**Maryam:** When I was in middle school, I moved to this small southern town where I was the only visible Muslim at my school and the only Muslim other than my siblings, to my knowledge, and so I think to some degree I was always 'othered'. And then as I got older, the mixture of sort of racism and Islamophobia just became more and more, I would say potent.

**Harleen:** I do remember things like Osama Bin Laden and those being shouted at us.

**Ameer:** We were at the park. And I remember my mom was pushing me on the swing and we had family friends with us. My mom wears the hijab and her friend at that time also, she wears the hijab, and we were with our family friends there. And we remember very clearly my siblings and I both, you know, my mom and her friend being called terrorists, right. And being asked to leave the country and telling us to go back to where we came from.

**Maryam:** School, growing up, was a place that I experienced a lot of racism, a lot of anti-Muslim racism that was prevalent in interactions with people, but also I think just even in curriculum, how things were taught and that was all the way up until college as well.

**Ameer:** The places that we faced Islamophobia the most were in public places, right? Like parks, the grocery store, places like that. When I was in school with my peers, with my teachers, that wasn't something I saw because I was at an all-Muslim school. But something that really stuck out to us, right, it stuck out to us, even as six-year-olds, even as seven-year-olds, is how much our school upped security. I mean, back then the doors for the school when typically locked, right? It was after 9/11 where we started to see that. After 9/11, every single door around our school was locked. After 9/11, at every single door, we had a security guard, a Muslim security guard. Not anyone. It was a Muslim security guard at every single door. And our families were very careful about who came and picked us up, who was walking up to the door. Did they have a child at the school? Who was the child? It was very, very cautious of who was walking in and out of our school because we were afraid that there was going to be some type of attack because we got so many threats to our Muslim school.

**Harleen:** I think it is more felt that I can, in retrospect, start to remember shifts as I perhaps got older until late elementary school into middle school. I remember we, I think, stopped flying maybe for a bit. We, I think in retrospect, we always sort of justified it, our long road trips, as it was more cost effective, we got to see more things, but I do remember that I think for a long time, we didn't fly as much.

**Ameer:** You can tell how stressed out our community was for the first, for years, actually after that. So that was something that I really began to see and I even remember some nights, we would get phone calls to our house with threats of people saying, we're going to kill your family. We're going to murder your family. I remember my dad would pick it up and it would be on speaker and right when he'd hear that, he'd just shut the phone so that we don't hear it as kids.

**Nour:** And I think that me and a lot of my friends and my sister, we were in this kind of gray space of yes, we were Iranian American, and our features look probably different than other kids in our class and we have different names, but at the same time, we were born and raised in California. And I think the way that 9/11 impacted us was that there was two different narratives being formed that you're either Muslim and Iranian, or you're not. And there was a lot of tension regarding my identity because I didn't really fit into either. I felt like I wasn't really fully accepted as an Iranian American and I wasn't really fully accepted as someone that's Middle Eastern because I didn't present as a Middle Eastern or Muslim person or what people had expected a Middle Eastern and Muslim person to look like.

**Ameer:** My skin color was politicized. My religion was politicized. The hijab was politicized, probably more so than anything else. That's where it really began to shape who I am and my experience. All of this really built who I am today and trying to create a narrative and tell the truth about who we are as Muslims.

**Harleen:** The energy my parents put into making sure we saw other Sikh youth. It was a very central part of my identity and I think a big part of that was just always being taught how central community organizing is to Sikhi and how fighting back against the powers at large always have been part of our history and should be part of our present and future.

**Video 2: 2016 Election and the Muslim & African Ban**

How did the 2016 election affect you and your community?

**Nour Vakhshoury:** I think the 2016 election brought up a lot of the same fears that I think a lot of our community felt after 9/11.

**Maryam Abdul-Kareem:** I do remember feeling both not surprised and also exhausted. There's so much violence against Muslims around the world, I think, which is perpetuated in disguise under war and terror policies or national security claims. So I knew all of that would continue regardless but also there would be more forms of violence that would come to the Forefront as we saw. It was really difficult to go through that experience of having that ban just goes through, the Muslim ban go through right away.

**Ameer Abdul:** This ban had stopped them from coming back. It had separated families and it really is something that affected over a 150 million people worldwide if we look at the numbers.

**Nour:** I really got to see firsthand like how this is touching families and individuals' lives who are just the residual consequences of this travel ban. They had no reason, they had no threat to the United States. They were just wanting to be with their loved one during a difficult time. And that was one of the things that I think also really shaped my experience. And also made me feel a lot more fortunate to go into law school and continue doing this work in a way where I can advocate and better advocate for these types of communities that are impacted by these laws.

**Ameer:** That 2016 election, I think really, really just allowed a lot of Muslims young Muslims to kick off their activism and their organizing careers.

**Harleen Kaur:** If I don't have a strong sense of my own identity and how that's been shaped by history, by national politics, by regional politics, I might be recreating some of the same problems here. And so for me, I think I had to sort of ground myself in that self-reflection, and that ended up leading to a lot of more grassroots raising work that I'm leading within the community.

**Ameer:** We really focused a lot of our energy around election season, around getting Muslims civically engaged in the political process. We worked with individuals really across the country to host registration drives, getting Muslims registered to vote, getting information out to our Muslim communities, speaking to them about the importance of voting.

**Nour:** The response of protesting and just going straight to the airports and showing up and showing that we're not in agreement with these policies. And I think that was a really powerful message and it's something that a lot of people were affected by, but to see the people coming together from all different parts of the AMEMSA communities showed that we can continue to move forward and that we're not going to allow one community or few communities within the AMEMSA community to suffer by themselves.

**Ameer:** We were making sure we're getting messages out to folks. We were making sure that our Muslim vote, that our Muslim voice will be an important part of this upcoming election and it will represent who we are as people, represent our culture, and it will represent our religion and what we

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stand for. We saw just months ago, how this new administration tore down the Muslim ban, and that speaks volumes to all the work that we did, all the organizing we did. We didn't stay quiet about it, right?

**Maryam:** So I do a lot of systems work, I am all about the roots. I think that in thinking about the roots of how we exist with each other, and engage with each other, there are certain issues that gets deemed AMEMSA issues and then certain issues that aren't. And a lot of them have to do with sort of racially who it impacts. Spoiler alert, all issues are AMEMSA issues because we're a vast community, but I think my point is just being able to see that there is sort of an opening of thought in space around what issues are deemed worthy to focus on and to highlight.

**Harleen:** So many of our politics, understandably, because of the fear we have around our own safety, the fear we have, again, around combating this violence, comes out of this idea that things will suddenly change, that all the sudden there might be a threat against us again, we might be in danger again and I think as the generation who is growing up here started to take over, it became more about how do we understand our personality in the US as Sikhs? What responsibility do we have? Given we're calling upon the history of organizing, of activism, of resistance, how does that translate to where we are now?

### **Video 3: Solidarity and Lessons in Activism**

**What does justice for Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim and South Asian communities look like, feel like, and mean?**

**Harleen Kaur:** What does Justice look like? I think it means being really rooted in the long fight versus how can I fix things immediately.

**Maryam Abdul-Kareem:** It means being really rooted in the collective well-being and wholeness. And it starts locally and every day. How do you treat your family, your neighbors, your community? It requires deep care and a self-accountability and reflection. I would say that it's about softening and connecting the hearts and purpose.

I think it looks like safety defined by communities directly impacted by policies and harmful practices. It looks like access to thriving resources, true interdependence, and connectedness. And I think most importantly, it feels like, it looks like freedom to live in our purpose and worship without systemic violence. And racialization.

**Harleen:** It means that we're not fighting for our safety based on this idea of US exceptionalism that, because we made it, you're going to be better than where we were before. It means for me, actually, when I think about really beautiful stories of Muslim-Sikh solidarity, for example, I actually did think of stories from Punjab. I think about stories from South Asia. And I think there's such a rich Legacy of Muslim-Sikh solidarity ongoing there. The current farmers' protests going on has been immense Muslim-Sikh solidarity, and so, to me, I think it's reminding ourselves that we don't have all the answers in the US.

A lot of the answers in the US come from indigenous and black communities. I think we can learn from them and the long histories of struggle they faced here, but also, drawing upon the histories of solidarity of resilience and activism that we have beyond our lifetimes too, I think is really important.

**Ameer Abdul:** One thing that I can recall is when we organized the fight against the Muslim ban and front of the White House, and when you looked across when you looked across the field there and you saw all these different people, and I loved that I didn't just see Palestinians. I didn't just see Syrian folk. I didn't just see folks from Pakistan or India, or one specific nation and background, but I saw all these different people who wanted to fight for this common issue. And it means ending all these forms of inequality, ending all these forms of misogyny and discrimination against our people. It means living in comfort, living without the fear of threat, living without the fear that someone is going to attack us for our faith.

**Nour Vakhshoury:** And also, just being understood in the way that we see ourselves. I feel like so often our narrative, and our identity is portrayed in this harmful narrative of AMEMSA communities are violent or they're terrorists. And this was a lot of what resulted after 9/11.

**What advice would you have for young people who want to/are learning to become activists?**

**Harleen:** James Baldwin also has this quote that, “if you ever feel like you're alone, just go and read,” that all of history, fiction, all that I think is there to inspire us and remind us that the words might be different, the people might be different but at the end of the day, it's really just this long struggle of how do we let go of our own ego and learn how to love one another as ourselves basically.

**Nour:** There will be chances to learn. Don't feel like you have to come into anything with a very strong experience or background. I would say go in for the opportunities and just build on that.

**Harleen:** I think the first place to start is I think really sitting with oneself and thinking about who are the communities that you care about, who are the communities that you're in conversation with?

**Ameer:** You want to put the folks who are being impacted the most in the front. You want to listen to what they're going through. You want to understand what they're going through and you want to follow their lead. That's how we're going to effectively create change.

**Maryam:** A lot of times we speak values and they don't show up in our actions, so it's really important to connect those and being sincere in that. And especially when it's difficult and some of this journey will require you to humble yourself.

**Ameer:** You need to really go out there and try to serve people not the way you want to serve them, but the way they want and need to be served, right? It's about centering, the folks who are marginalized, you need to center the folks who are enduring and taking on these, facing the issues the most. Right? We're not going to come in and tell them, “Hey, this is the solution”.

**Nour:** Really be cognizant of just taking care of yourself and selfcare. It's really important, especially to be able to continue doing this work and moving forward. It is difficult to engage with at times, especially if it's work that it's affecting your communities.

**Ameer:** We deserve to also relax. We deserve to take a breather and take a step back. That, to me, really is a part of what justice means. Being able to take that step back and take a breath. It's so simple.

**Maryam:** Violence like colonization, white supremacy, imperialism, capitalism, all the isms', extermination, doesn't have borders. And I think that's important to understand that it adapts, adjust and oppresses. And so I found the more that I do this work, the more I understand the need for solidarity and a very true sense, solidarity that understands that oppression pushes people and communities to the margins, and so just like the organizing concept of likes entering the folks at the margin, and so it's important for our collective liberation to see and center those folks at the margin, of any given issue and system. And so I'm constantly learning how important that lens is, and mobilization's important, direct action's important, but really trying to inform the lens in which we move collectively.

**Nour:** I think having a community to fall back on is really, really helpful. And it's really important to be able to continue doing this work in a way that's meaningful and in a way that you're able to feel rejuvenated and move forward and not feel drained and burnt out.

**Maryam:** For me, no matter how I might feel about a person, I move with the understanding that life is sacred. It is divinely scared and should be honored, and so that's a reminder for me to push towards abolition and gets me through the difficult parts in building relationships, And then, finally, I guess, finally, I would say be in deep relationship and solidarity without conflating issues, see the nuance in the difference and embrace the collective vision anyway. And there's this beautiful, Ella Baker quote that I love to use and she says, "give light and people will find way." Ans so for me, I would say, be in space where you can bring and receive light and then work and pray with others to find the way.

# Appendix to Module 16: Rising Youth Activism

## *Curriculum Framework*

### **Goal**

Students will be able to use their independent learning to define and recognize examples of solidarity and justice and to reflect on how to include activism within their own lives.

### **Essential questions**

1. How did the aftermath of 9/11 affect young people from AMEMSA communities?
2. How were the immediate impact of 9/11 and the immediate impact of the Muslim Ban similar? How were they different?
3. What is “solidarity”?
4. What does justice look like for Arab, Muslim, and South Asian communities twenty years after 9/11?
5. Who is part of the social change ecosystem?

### **Understandings**

Students will understand that...

1. 9/11 impacted and shaped the lives of young people who grew up in its aftermath.
2. many young activists from AMEMSA communities were drawn to activism because of the racism they experienced as children.

### **Knowledge**

Students will know...

1. what the categories of Arab, Middle Eastern, Muslim, and South Asian entail.
2. the meaning of solidarity.
3. what is the Muslim and African Ban.
4. what motivated young people from Arab, Muslim and South Asian communities to engage in social justice work.

### **Skills**

Students will be able to...

1. analyze the issues that stemmed from the 2016 elections, particularly the Muslim and African Ban.
2. assess the importance of solidarity as a strategy for social and policy change.



3. gain a deeper appreciation of how activism can be interwoven into the lives of young people.

### Summary of Performance Tasks (Assessment)

1. **Video Activity 1: Identity and the Spark of Activism (Lesson 1, Day 1):** Students will learn about and from four young activists who were in elementary school when 9/11 took place. They describe the spark of their activism and how their experiences growing up in the shadow of 9/11 impacted them in lasting ways. Students will then discuss the video in small groups.
2. **Video Activity 2: The 2016 Election and the Muslim Ban (Lesson 1, Day 1):** Students will learn about how the passage of the Muslim and African Ban impacted the young activists' work and their communities. They will also learn about the impact of the 2016 election on the young activists' experiences and engagement with politics. Students will then discuss the video in small groups.
3. **Research Assignment (Homework after Lesson 1, Day 1):** Students will review resource sheets on the following topics: AMEMSA communities, the impact of 9/11 on Sikh Americans, Islamophobia, the government's response to 9/11, and hate violence and state violence following 9/11 and pre and post 2016. Students will use the resource sheets to initiate their own research, which they will share in the next class.
4. **Video Activity 3: Solidarity and Lessons in Activism (Lesson 1, Day 2):** Students will learn about the four activists' perspectives and work on solidarity and justice for those most marginalized by Islamophobia, racism, and white supremacy, and how high school-aged youth can get involved or further their involvement in activism. Using what they learned in Video 3, students will fill in a graphic organizer to explore how solidarity shows up in the three videos and why it is important to practice solidarity.
5. **Turn and Talk Brainstorm Activity (Lesson 1, Day 2):** In pairs, students will brainstorm ideas of how they can practice solidarity in their school or community.
6. **Reflective Essay (Optional Extension Activity):** A 250-word Reflective Essay in which students consider how they might pursue justice in light of the advice and experiences shared by the young activists.
7. **Optional Extension Activity (Lesson 1, Day 1):** Students will search for articles from between 9/11/2001-12/31/2001 that mention young people from AMEMSA communities and the impact of 9/11 on them. They will evaluate the title or content of the article to determine if it reinforces the stereotypes or negativity that the young people in the videos discuss having experienced.
8. **Debriefs and whole-class discussions:** In each lesson, students will apply key concepts in groups or individually, then return to the whole class space to articulate their findings and takeaways.

## *Common Core Standards*

### **History/Social Studies 11th and 12th Grade**

#### **Key Ideas and Details:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.1

Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, connecting insights gained from specific details to an understanding of the text as a whole.

#### **Craft and Structure:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.5

Analyze in detail how a complex primary source is structured, including how key sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text contribute to the whole.

#### **Integration of Knowledge and Ideas:**

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.7

Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g., visually, quantitatively, as well as in words) in order to address a question or solve a problem.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.9

Integrate information from diverse sources, both primary and secondary, into a coherent understanding of an idea or event, noting discrepancies among sources.

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## *About the Contributors*

Deepa Iyer is the Director of Strategic Initiatives at the Building Movement Project and the host of the *Solidarity Is This* podcast. She served as executive director of South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT) for ten years in the wake of 9/11 and has written a book called *We Too Sing America* that explores the experiences of communities in post 9/11 America.

Safaya Fawzi is a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion professional who actively supports organizations in leading, educating, training, and communicating around systems change. She has been affiliated with many organizations, including the Building Movement Project.

Kitty Hu is Building Movement Project's Communications and Programs Assistant. She is a Chinese diasporic documentary filmmaker, impact producer, and visual journalist with roots in the Bay Area, California.

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